

VZCZCXR07585

PP RUEHBC RUEHKUK RUEHROV

DE RUEHMS #0640 2521218

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

P 081218Z SEP 08

FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9930

INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0561

RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0448

UNCLAS MUSCAT 000640

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/PPD, NEA/PI, INR/R/MR, NEA/SA/EX/PMO  
LONDON FOR NEA WATCHER

PARIS FOR NEA WATCHER

FOREIGN PRESS CENTER FOR NEA WATCHER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OIIP KPAO KMDR MU

SUBJECT: OMAN MEDIA REACTION

**¶1.** SUMMARY: Daily "Al-Watan" urged GCC countries and Iran to quickly settle the territorial dispute with the United Arab Emirates. On September 5, "Al Watan" attacked Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin's description of the Iraq war as divine action. State daily "Oman" hailed Syria's progress in building relations with France, crediting recent meetings with political progress in Lebanon. END SUMMARY.

-----  
IRAN, UAE DISPUTE PROVIDES "EXCUSES TO INTERFERE"  
-----

**¶2.** On September 4, private Arabic daily "Al Watan" (circulation 42,000) encouraged the GCC and Iran to resolve territorial issues, in part to avoid American interference. "GCC Countries and Iran: The Relationship must be Strengthened" said:

"GCC countries have always been keen to establish relations governed by respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states. Unfortunately, the statement by the GCC foreign ministers in the 108th ministerial said that they could not reach a positive outcome with Iran over the three disputed islands. This region should stay stable and secure, particularly given its tremendous resources, which already expose it to conflict. Countries of the region must not resort to conflict and argument, which give others excuses to interfere in the region, as has happened in the past. There is an urgent need to find a mechanism to maintain security and stability in the region."

-----  
PALIN REMARKS "MAKE US WONDER"  
-----

**¶3.** "Al-Watan" on September 5 criticized Republican Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin's description of the Iraq war as "God's plan". "Is Invasion a Divine Mission?" said:

"Alaska Governor and Vice Presidential pick Sarah Palin stated at a student symposium in Alaska that U.S. forces went into Iraq on "a task that is from God". When candidates call for aggression on peaceful countries, calling such action divine, it makes us wonder. What is the relationship between divine will and the killing of Iraq people, looting, and using the military to secure oil profits? Aggression is an act of injustice, and God's will does not accept injustice. Sarah Palin could have asked the students to pray for the safe return of America's men and women from this military adventure that has only profited oil dealers."

-----  
SYRIA'S "BRIDGE OF COMMUNICATION" WITH FRANCE  
-----

**¶4.** Government-owned Arabic daily "Oman" (circulation 38,000) complemented Syria for its role building new ties to France, noting

the importance of the recent meetings in Damascus. "Damascus Meetings and Further Relaxation" said:

"The meetings in Syria between France and Syria, and then with Qatar and Turkey, are some of the most important held in the region recently. Syria, which has been subjected to pressure and attempts at isolation, has managed to open bridges of communication with France. France has already anticipated a significant change in its policies toward Damascus, facilitated by Syrian policies and flexibility. We already see the benefits in Lebanon, where the government is establishing national unity and has built bilateral relations with Damascus. Additionally, the positions put forward during these meetings regarding an attack against Iran, specifically the position of not involving Gulf States in the dispute, lend this summit further credibility."

GRAPPO